

**Statement of His Excellency Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu,  
Secretary-General of the OIC, at the Launch of the OIC/ISESCO/UNICEF Report  
Investing in the Children of the Islamic World**

In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Beneficent

Your Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, exercising the chairmanship of the Tenth Islamic Summit

The Honorable Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me much pleasure to associate the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in welcoming you all to this event. The launch of our joint report titled "Investing in the Children of the Islamic World", today, marks an important preparatory step toward the convening of the First Ministerial Conference on the Child in collaboration with ISESCO and UNICEF in Rabat, Morocco from 7 – 9 November, 2005.

The Conference, mandated by the Islamic Summit, and by the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, spells recognition of the need for concrete action to address the plight of the children of the Islamic World so that they may have a happy, healthy and rewarding upbringing, and proper orientation and preparation for their roles in their families, communities and professions in the time ahead.

Towards this goal, we have drawn guidance from the teaching of Islam, and from the development priorities and sectoral targets of our Member States, and the recommendations of the World Conference on Children, all of which encourage a serious assessment of needs, and based upon this, carefully prepared programmes to address those needs, not in isolation, but in the context of healthier, happier, and more productive family lives.

As you will see, the report being launched today, while reflecting the progress of development efforts benefiting children in several OIC Member States, spells in some detail the socio-economic constraints surrounding the families with devastating effects upon their children, in other OIC Member States, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. This, in large measure, is a reflection of colonial neglect, and its influence upon some unhealthy social practices which not only ignored but, in some instances, even went against, the enlightened Islamic values – the same values that had guided the Islamic Society in the past towards harmonious family lives, and excellence in professional and productive pursuits. Conscious of this unacceptable situation, the OIC Member States are

seriously seeking speedy remedial measure, and the forthcoming Rabat Ministerial Conference would be an important step in that direction.

It is our expectation that through the Rabat Conference, our Member States will develop the directions to create the enabling environment, and the necessary institutional mechanisms, to address the educational, health care, nutritional and other urgent needs of our children; and adopt collective measures that would be instrumental in the sharing of expertise and experiences in this effort. With this, let me assure you of my complete support to any follow-up measures, stemming from the recommendations of the Rabat Conference, which may require actions by the OIC at the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, and the Summit, levels.

Before closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. Hamid Albar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, for so generously hosting this event today, and for the guidance to the initiative for the Rabat Ministerial Conference. My thanks and appreciation go also to ISESCO, and UNICEF, for their enthusiastic partnership in this effort.

Thank you very much for your attention. I am pleased and honored to be with you today.